



HCHA Newsletter

Harris County Healthcare Alliance

Reminder
Building a Federal Health Board: Impact on Texas
May 22, 2009
8am - Noon
(see related story p. 2)

Alliance Member & Community Survey

The Harris County Healthcare Alliance is asking your help so that we may become more valuable for Greater Houston, your organization, and for you.

In the coming weeks, you will be asked to respond by phone interview or online survey to tell us how we are doing. Please guide us in assessing our strengths and weaknesses. Inform us of how you'd wish for us to change to become more effective in our mission.

We appreciate your participation.

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Member Spotlight

San José Clinic

In 2006, San José Clinic adopted a strategic plan, which detailed five goals for 2006-2011. Included in the strategic plan, San José Clinic and partners CHRISTUS Health, CHRISTUS Foundation for HealthCare and the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word have been collaborating to create a 55,000 square foot health center to serve the uninsured. Located in Midtown, the site is bordered by Fanning, McGowen, San Jacinto, and Dennis streets. Construction is underway, with a target move-in early 2010. One block east of the MetroRail and

near several bus routes, the complex will offer easy access for San José Clinic patients and volunteers traveling via public and private transportation, as well as doctors traveling from the Texas Medical Center.

This opportunity is truly a dream-come-true for San José Clinic, since CHRISTUS Foundation for HealthCare is committed

to raising the capital funds, as well as building and maintaining the new building. Once the new health center is complete, San José Clinic will relocate its medical and dental services into the new facility and pay the nominal \$1 per year rent. Thanks to San José Clinic's dedicated corps of volunteer physicians, dentists, support staff and teaching affiliations, uninsured patients can access primary and specialty medical care, dental care and pharmaceuticals for little or no cost. The new health center will



Future San José Clinic

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Grant Announcement

The Harris County Health Facilities Development (HCHFD) Corporation has approved a \$50,000 grant award to the Alliance that will offset the cost of purchasing the Network Sciences Medicaider™ eligibility system for member community clinics. Federally Qualified Health Centers will also be able to

support the cost of implementation with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act under the capital improvements component (see article on page 2).

The common eligibility system will be implemented at member safety-net primary care clinics in order to assist them in meeting the growing proportion of primary care demand among

uninsured and underserved populations by improving their payer mix. The system enables quick and accurate screening of patients' eligibility for over 100 federal, state, local, corporate and charity programs. Utilization of the system will also decrease the number of uninsured residents in the county by linking more of them to existing public programs such as Medicaid and CHIP in a shorter period of time. Other clin-

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Unprecedented Funding Awards to Federally Qualified Health Centers

Federally Qualified Health Centers in the area are receiving vast funding support through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into law on February 17th.

Two new FQHCs – Houston Area Community Services and MotherLand, Inc. have been designated through \$2.6 million in New Access Point funding. FQHCs in Harris County, are also receiving two-year “Increased Demand for Services” grants, ranging from \$100,000 to \$404,000 that will increase as well as retain jobs, and ensure the provision of quality, primary healthcare to almost 20,000 additional uninsured and/or medically underserved individuals.

Besides funding for additional providers/services through the ARRA initiative, the U.S. Health Resources and Services

Administration will be awarding infrastructure funding to provide for the construction, renovation, equipment and health information technology needs of FQHCs. Harris County clinics will receive approximately \$3 million (\$400,000 per award max) for capital improvements under a formula distribution. A future competitive round of funding will be allocated to centers across the nation for major capital and Health Information Technology projects.

ARRA contains a significant amount of funding for health related purposes, including prevention and public health, research, healthcare services and increased funding to States for Medicaid programs.

Incentive payments for providers who have Electronic Health Records will be available starting in 2011 through either the Medicare or Medicaid program

(a provider cannot be eligible for both). FQHC providers will most likely qualify for the Medicaid incentive programs that will provide for up to 85% of the allowable costs of electronic health record implementation or a maximum of \$75,000 per provider over five years.

While the above funding represents unprecedented federal support for FQHCs, it will by no means meet all of their needs for long-term support. HRSA continues to emphasize the importance of centers’ leveraging other available public and private funding for their infrastructure projects in particular.

The need for a well-coordinated, comprehensive plan for increasing the capacity of Harris County’s community health centers has never been more acute and the Harris

County Healthcare Alliance looks forward to facilitating this plan with its Member organizations and community partners.

Building a Federal Health Board

President Obama is considering the concept of a Federal Health Board modeled on the oversight function of the Federal Reserve Bank. A Federal Health Board would offer a public framework within which a private healthcare system could operate more effectively and efficiently. The Fed’s function would be to: reduce administrative costs, set evidence-based standards for benefits and quality, make the healthcare system more transparent, and set standards on comparative clinical and cost effectiveness of treatment options.

Join healthcare providers from across the State to review the models and options.

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San José Clinic (cont’ d)

greatly expand San José Clinic’s service capacity as a “one-stop shop” for a continuum of care. For example, the Medical Department will grow from 11 to 23 exam rooms, Dental is growing from 7 to 13 operatories, and the Eye Clinic will expand from 4 to 5 lanes, plus a diagnostic area. In addition to expanding medical, dental and optical specialties along with pharmacy services, mental health services through collabora-

In 2008, San José Clinic provided 34,849 clinic visits to 4,803 individuals.

tive arrangements with other MH providers will be added.

Within the new building’s 55,000 sq. feet of space (from previous 17,000), San José Clinic will utilize 35,000 sq. feet, with an additional 20,000 sq. feet of building for public spaces and other social service providers such as Catholic Charities, literacy programs, and CHRISTUS Foundation for Healthcare.

Finally, San José Clinic will be implementing an Electronic Health Records with implementation this year before the move projected in 2010.

Medicaider (cont’d)

ics who have implemented this system have identified and helped enroll more of their patients into such programs (see Network Sciences website: www.netsci.net).

The system will also be integrated with the Quad Agency

system at a later date so that clinics can share eligibility data with these agencies as well, helping coordinate our complex healthcare system, as well as facilitating efficient delivery of care.